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Editorials

A New Demand to Probe the CIA

SENATOR EUGENE McCARTHY (Dem-Minn.) has joined the long procession of qualified workers who believe that some supervision and some restraint must be placed upon the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) as it gumshoes around the world in pursuit of high international adventure.

He is particularly worried about American foreign policy which, he suspects, may be both made and directed by the CIA as it engineers coups d'etat, trains secret armies, promotes bombing raids, and otherwise pokes its thumbs into affairs that develop into U-2 incidents, Bay of Pigs fiascos, and burned-out American embassies.

Senator McCarthy wants a Senate committee set up to conduct a thorough investigation into the CIA, which enjoys one of the fattest budgets and largest payrolls extant in Government and conducts its business in darkest secrecy. To be sure, senior members of a few Congressional committees have nominal authority to ask questions and peek at the books, but it is exercised with the utmost discretion and the slightest curiosity, so that what the agency does and how much it costs remain a virtual mystery.

THE DANGERS in such a system were recognized from the outset, and as early as 1955 General Mark Clark, no stranger to international intrigue—recommended, as head of a Hoover Commission task force, that not one, but two “watchdog” committees be set up to maintain a steady check on the CIA. From year to year, similar efforts to establish outside surveillance of the secret agency failed, and it has remained invisible and immune to meaningful Congressional scrutiny.

Senator McCarthy's concern arises from recent CIA intermeddling in Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Vietnam. It involves not the sorry outcome of CIA enterprises in these areas, but the inevitable influence of such enterprises upon American foreign policy. Where such matters as espionage and the collection of information are concerned, the CIA may need to work secretly and beyond surveillance. When its activities impinge upon foreign policy, as they unhappily have in too many recent cases, they must be subject to competent, responsible supervision, lest that policy be compromised beyond repair.

25 YEAR RE-REVIEW